

82% of the wealth generated in 2017 in the world went to the richest 1%

Badi Shams



That was the title of the news today and it followed by:

"A CEO from one of the world's top five global fashion brands has to work for just four days to earn what a garment worker in Bangladesh will earn in an entire lifetime."

This headline was today on TV, Facebook, newspapers and the rest of the social media. This is not the first time such numbers highlighting the sad economic situation of the world. As I am staring at these, my mind is trying to imagine the plight of the poor and

could not wonder how a fraction of that 82% would change the lives of billions of poor people.

To me, it was the only way I could interpret these tragic statistics and that made me extremely sad. Then the thought came to me that the rich 1% see this news and they have seen it before and has not changed their ways at all, and that thought made me feel helpless. I felt there is no hope and this widening gap between rich and the poor will continue growing, and no one can stop it. I questioned about our humanity that allows these disparities continue.

Then I decided that for my part I will try to make this story not to go away fast so I am writing about it and hoping to bring it to the attention of as many people I can reach.

When I see these kinds of numbers cannot but remember the words of Baha'u'llah:

“Why, then, exhibit such greed in amassing the treasures of the earth, when your days are numbered and your chance is well-nigh lost? Will ye not, then, O heedless ones, shake off your slumber?”

-Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 127

“O Ye Rich Ones on Earth! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease.”

– Baha'u'llah, *Hidden Words*, Persian 54

Here is the rest of the news:

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DAVOS, Switzerland — A CEO from one of the world's top five global fashion brands has to work for just four days to earn what a garment worker in Bangladesh will earn in an entire lifetime, campaigning group Oxfam International said Monday.

In the run-up to the World Economic Forum in the Swiss ski resort of Davos, Oxfam has sought to put inequality at the heart of this week's deliberations of the rich and powerful.

“The billionaire boom is not a sign of a thriving economy but a symptom of a failing economic system,” said Winnie Byanyima, Oxfam International's executive director. “The people who make our clothes, assemble our phones and grow our food are being exploited to ensure a steady supply of cheap goods, and swell the profits of corporations and billionaire investors.”

In its report "Reward Work, Not Wealth," Oxfam says 82 percent of the wealth generated last year went to the richest 1 percent of the global population while the poorest half of the world's population — 3.7 billion people — saw no increase in their wealth.

Billionaire wealth, it added, has risen by an annual average of 13 percent since 2010, over six times more than the wages of average workers, and the number of billionaires rose at an astonishing rate of one every two days in the year to March 2017.

Oxfam listed a series of actions government should take, including limiting returns to shareholders and top executives, ensuring workers receive a minimum "living wage" and pushing through policies to eliminate the gender pay gap and protect the rights of women workers. It also urged a clampdown on tax avoidance and other associated practices, which have been highlighted by the recent publication of the "Panama Papers" and the "Paradise Papers."

Oxfam, which has sought for several years to highlight the problem of inequality on the eve of the World Economic Forum, said that without action, the populist and nationalist tides around the world will only become more acute.

"We've seen a shift in narrative in terms of what people say, but we haven't seen action to match those words," said Nick Bryer, Oxfam's Davos campaign manager.

Governments, he said, need to "get back into the driving seat" and challenge the big corporations and the billionaires. "There's plenty they can do," he said.

There is not much can be said about what this news and these statistics indicate. To me, they indicate a sick economic system that favours the rich and ignores the plight of the poor while humanity stands on the sidelines and watch it continue.

I hope soon we wake up to the reality that we could be the instrument of the change and even though small but still change by creating in our hearts empathy for the poor and then doing what all we can to remedy this injustice.

We all can make a difference by our actions, big or small. To stop this trend, we have to do some soul-searching and come to a course of action. We cannot close our eyes to these kinds of statistics and do nothing.